
The Precarious Center

Religious Leadership among African Christians

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■ **ABSTRACT:** This article addresses a long-standing conundrum in the anthropology of religion concerning the ambiguous status of religious leaders: they are subjects of power in that they are able to exert power over others, yet they are objects of power in that they rely on empowerment through others. Taking African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity in Zambia as my example, I argue that church leaders' strategies to stabilize their authority have unintended consequences since these strategies can contribute to the precariousness of their positions. By drawing fundamental distinctions between themselves and members of the laity as regards their own extraordinariness, church leaders raise high expectations about their own capacities that may turn out to be impossible to fulfill. Yet even the opposite strategy of strengthening one's authority by embedding oneself in socio-religious networks can eventually lead to a *destabilization* of church leaders' authority because it increases their dependence on factors that are beyond their control.

■ **KEYWORDS:** African Christianity, empowerment, extraordinariness, paradoxical effects, precariousness, religious leadership, strategies of self-authorization

Among the books published in the field of the anthropology of religion, the title of Susan Harding's *The Book of Jerry Falwell* (2000) stands out owing to what at first sight seems to be hagiographic reverence. However, upon reading the book, the title turns out to be a piece of daring playfulness and to contain an ironic twist to its main argument. Describing her first fieldwork encounter with Jerry Falwell, who until his death in 2007 was the leader of a "cultural movement [that] swept through many American fundamentalist communities during the 1980s" (ibid.: ix), Harding pictures him as a "large and irrepressible man with a baritone voice and a commanding presence" (ibid.: x). Preachers like him, she states, "are the nodes, the transformers, in the religious knowledge networks that articulate fundamentalist communities [and] are thus pivotal figures in moments of dramatic transformation" (ibid.: 12).

While Harding (2000: xiii) refers to Falwell as an effective 'master-speaker', the subtitle of her book (*Fundamentalist Language and Politics*) draws attention to one of Harding's central points, namely, that the main protagonist of her book "inhabits a world generated by Bible-based stories" (ibid.: x) and that "Falwell's empire was, in effect, a hive of workshops, of sites of cultural production, that smelted, shaped, packaged, and distributed myriad fundamentalist rhetorics



and narratives” (ibid.: 15). Fundamental Baptist hermeneutics rests on the belief that the Bible and “everything Jerry Falwell authors is true” (ibid.: 88). Nonetheless, Falwell’s speeches produced gaps, anomalies, excesses, and “apertures for the uncanny” (ibid.: 90), so that this religious movement was characterized by “heterogeneity not homogeneity, hybridity not purity, fluidity not fixity” (ibid.: 274). What is more, as Harding mentions in passing, “Falwell did not himself borrow and blend most of the language attributed to him—his ghostwriters did” (ibid.: 273), a fact that “further amplified the sense of him as *a man without a center*” (ibid.; italics added). Considering the latter remark, suspicions that *The Book of Jerry Falwell* might be plagued by undue deference to its subject turn out to be baseless. The tension brought out so eloquently in this volume between the account of Jerry Falwell as a central instance in his followers’ religious life and the demonstration that he was “a complex, internally troubled, chronically unstable production” (ibid.: 103) prompts important and as yet unresolved questions in the anthropology of religion.

In this article, I follow Harding’s lead in reflecting on a long-standing anthropological conundrum about the status of religious leaders that has thus far been most prominently discussed with reference to ‘divine kingdom’ (see, e.g., Richards 1968). On the one hand, religious leadership finds expression in an elevated socio-religious position. It goes along with the attribution of extraordinary (often but not necessarily superhuman) qualities to the person concerned, and it means that this person’s bodily presence, thoughts, emotional and spiritual states, experiences, utterances, and/or actions are—at least on specific occasions—given authoritative prominence over those of other (allegedly ordinary) persons. This socio-religious prominence and the idea of the religious leader “as the animating center who brings the collective into being” (Lindholm 2002: 373) are referred to here with the term ‘the center’, even if this prominence happens to be contested, ephemeral, and not a unique instance of religious authority among a certain group of people at a particular point in time.¹ On the other hand, social scientists have time and again come to the conclusion that this ‘centrality’ is fundamentally dependent on (allegedly ordinary) others who pay heightened attention to those in elevated socio-religious positions in order to be religiously empowered themselves. It is in this sense that, paraphrasing Harding’s terminology, the centrality of religious leaders can be said, to represent a ‘chronically unstable *co*-production’ between leaders and followers.

Max Weber’s work on types of ‘legitimate authority’, and particularly his notion of ‘charisma’, illustrates the ambiguity of this *co*-production. In Weber’s (1968a: 48; italics added) well-known definition, charisma is specified as “*a certain quality of an individual’s personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities*. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is *treated as a leader*.” At first glance, this definition appears to entail a peculiar inconsistency. Charisma is first said to be based on a ‘certain quality’ of an individual’s personality, thus putting the stress on the personal characteristics of the respective subject; shortly afterward, Weber reverses the perspective, now making the charismatic individual the object of the interpretations and actions of other persons, who ‘treat’ the individual as a ‘leader’. Looked at more closely, it becomes clear that charisma is here depicted as a dialectical relationship with ‘claims’, on the one hand, and ‘acts of recognition’, on the other. Weber (1968b: 20) holds that a religious leader’s “charismatic claim breaks down if his mission is not recognized by those to whom he feels he has been sent. If they recognize him, he is their master—so long as he knows how to maintain recognition through ‘proving’ himself.” For this reason, “charisma is original in the moment and the person . . . in which it is felt and seen. Yet it is also dependent on the context in which it occurs” (Feuchtwang 2008: 92).²

In what follows, I make heuristic use of the trope ‘the center’ to discuss ambiguities in African Christian leadership in rural southern Zambia. In arguing that the leaders of African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic churches in this region can be characterized as ‘precarious’ centers, Weber’s point that their religious authority is an essentially fragile affair that has to be continuously confirmed or even constituted anew is not merely corroborated (see also Kirsch 2008).³ Beyond that, church leaders can be said to find themselves in a precarious position because their ways of living and ‘religioning’ are constantly watched over with skepticism by their followers. In other words, while making demands on the members of the laity concerning faith and adherence to a Christian lifestyle, church leaders themselves are “a source of expectations of the extraordinary” (Feuchtwang 2008: 94). As a consequence, they are measured by extraordinarily high standards, some of which are impossible to fulfill.⁴ The lay religionists’ anticipatory alertness to the church leaders’ possible slips, malfunctioning, and misbehavior is driven by people’s skepticism regarding absolute claims to socio-religious authority, as well as by a certain sensation-seeking attitude and—if a given church leader is not perceived to be living up to people’s expectations—sometimes even a measure of *Schadenfreude*. It thus becomes clear that the routinization of religious charisma should not always be interpreted as a process of degradation. Depending on the context, it can also represent an accomplishment that sets Pentecostal-charismatic leaders free from the relentless pressure to perform in extraordinary ways.

To put it in a nutshell, I suggest that, in the final analysis, the church leaders’ strategies to stabilize their authority have unintended and paradoxical effects by also contributing to the precariousness of their socio-religious positions. In the remainder of this article, I discuss two types of strategies. First, I show that the church leaders’ attempts to draw a fundamental distinction between themselves and others by stressing their own socio-religious extraordinariness—for example, by claiming exceptional knowledgeability—can exorbitantly fuel the laity’s expectations. Second, I demonstrate that even the opposite strategy, namely, to establish and strengthen one’s authority by embedding oneself in socio-religious networks of different sorts, at times gives occasion to its destabilization.

The Center Is Dead, Long Live the Center!

Writing about centers, religious or otherwise, is a precarious undertaking for an anthropologist. Over the last few decades, center-periphery models have been taken to task from a variety of angles (see Appadurai 1986), some of them diametrically opposed to each other. On the one hand, there have been calls directed at anthropologists to leave behind ‘the savage slot’ (Trouillot 1991) and to turn toward the ethnographic study of ‘centers of calculation’ (Latour 1987). The concomitant shift from researching the (supposed) exoticism of subaltern or minority populations in marginal areas of the world to inquiring into the powerful heartlands of decision-making, ruling, administration, and adjudication not only affects what are seen to be valid and legitimate objects of anthropological investigation; it also implies a momentous repositioning of the discipline itself. On the other hand, one finds a persistent drive among anthropologists to question the conditions of possibility of such heartlands or even to doubt their existence.

This questioning can take the form of a reminder that centrality—like remoteness (see Ardener 1987)—is a relative term because an ascription of something as ‘being central’ inevitably depends on the point of view of the person making this ascription. That being said, it is just a small step from relativizing to pluralizing centrality, similar to what happened to ‘Modernity’ and other capitalized words that modern science previously used exclusively in the singular. In turn, these moves to relativize, pluralize, distribute, and thus provincialize centers (Chakrabarty 2000) made

it possible for social scientists to address the complex and partly counter-intuitive interlacing of relationships between different centers. Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (2006: 378) discusses the tension between what he calls “metropolitan provincialism” and “provincial cosmopolitanism” in anthropology: “Metropolitan provincialism means the ignorance that hegemonic centers usually have of the production of non-hegemonic centers. Provincial cosmopolitanism means the knowledge that non-hegemonic centers usually have of the production of hegemonic centers. This asymmetrical ignorance may express itself in such curious albeit common situations as the fact that the history of universal anthropology (i.e. of hegemonic anthropologies) is known and studied by non-hegemonic anthropologists but the reverse is not true.”

Finally, anthropologists have been at the forefront of critically scrutinizing the idea that there is a powerful essence (centrality) behind a façade of powerfulness (centralism). For instance, Michael Taussig (2003: 297) has persuasively argued that the unveiling of a secret in a religious cult always reveals the existence of another one and that “[t]o the extent that the secret can be and is revealed ... revelation is precisely what the secret intends” (see also Taussig 1999). Along these lines, anthropologists have sought to degrade the secrecy claims of both religious and political centers to establish that there is no substance to them, contending that what these centers conceal in acts of self-authorization is nothing but emptiness.

In addition to the above, exploring centers is also precarious for anthropologists because it requires a peculiar sensitivity with regard to the researcher’s ethical self-positioning, as has been demonstrated in debates on the challenges of studying up (Gusterson 1997; Nader 1972; Ortner 2010). The question here is whether classifying and treating something as ‘being central’ within a particular field of ethnographic research, as Harding’s *The Book of Jerry Falwell* appears to do, itself contributes to establishing its centralism in that field. As a consequence, anthropologists have found themselves in the predicament between their wish to graft descriptive and non-normative representations of heartlands of decision-making, ruling, administration, and adjudication, on the one hand, and the apprehension that, when they do so, others might see them as being compliant or even complicit in constituting hierarchies, on the other hand.

Yet as I elaborate in the present article with a view to the anthropology of religion—in particular African-initiated Christianity—the act of investigating and conceptualizing centers is also precarious for the simple reason that centrality is an essentially precarious state. Apart from unmediated forms of religious practice, in which ‘live and direct’ (Engelke 2004, 2007) contact with divine powers is assumed to be possible for individuals, the relationship between religious experts and lay religionists tends to entail a double bind: lay religionists seek empowerment by tapping into the extraordinary spiritual powers of religious experts; however, having been attributed special powers and assigned an elevated position, religious experts can exploit this quest for empowerment to their personal advantage. This, in turn, can have drawbacks for lay religionists, tending, therefore, to make them skeptical of claims to religious authority.

As regards the anthropology of Christianity in Africa, there was a time when scholars in this field of study were almost exclusively and quite excessively concerned with what they assumed to be the center stage in African-initiated Christianity. Above all, they were interested in the leaders of African-initiated churches, sketching their biographies and reflecting about their theologies.⁵ In more recent years, interest in this subject matter has decreased, giving way to a more decentered focus on everyday religiosity that pays attention to the diversity of actors involved in African Christianity.⁶ This broadening of perspective is laudable because it helps avoid the hagiographic undertones that are characteristic of some publications in this field. However, most importantly for my argument in this article, decentering the perspective has also led to a situation where, with notable exceptions (e.g., Werbner 2011), the issue of religious centers has been de-thematized to such an extent that we are now faced with a remarkable discrepancy

between the relative lack of interest in this topic on the part of the analysts of African Christianity and the conspicuous interest in it on the part of those practicing this form of religion.

Given this situation—as well as the observation, noted above, that writing about centers is a precarious undertaking for anthropologists—what needs to be considered in this article is how a balanced understanding of centrality in African Christianity can be attained that takes into account both the lay religionists' quest for empowerment through religious centers *and* the difficulties that contemporary anthropology has in conceptualizing religious centers.

Richard Werbner (2011) has recently presented a rich ethnographic study of young charismatics in urban Botswana that explores how these charismatics engage with the church members' quest for well-being and asks the question—pertinent for our understanding of African Christianity, as well as many other issues explored by anthropologists—how willful individualism and caring empathy can co-exist in people's engagement with others. According to Werbner, the answer to this question lies in a consideration of long-standing concepts of personhood that inform how these charismatics enact their selves, alternating between a permeable, partible, and socially empathetic self, on the one hand, and a self that is autonomous, self-seeking, and self-interested, on the other. Werbner's book makes an important contribution not only to the renewed interest in anthropology in the question of 'what makes a Christian?' (cf. Maxwell 2012), but also with regard to the issue of leadership in African Christianity. However, some vexing issues remain with regard to the precarious socio-religious status of African Christian leaders, most of which have to do with my earlier observation that these leaders should be looked on as both subjects of power, in that they are in a position to exert power over others, and objects of power, in that their ability to do so relies on acts of empowerment through others.

In what follows, I will address this precariousness of religious leadership with reference to four strategies of self-authorization in African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity. First, this form of leadership is commonly claimed to be based on an unusual knowledgeability, such as outstanding theological and pneumatological expertise. Yet, as I will show, church leaders face difficulties in acquiring certain kinds of knowledge, which puts them at a structural disadvantage compared to lay religionists, especially when it comes to acquiring information about what their competitors—that is, other churches in their respective religious fields—are doing. Second, it is often stated that the elevated socio-religious position of Pentecostal-charismatic leaders is owing to their superior spiritual vigor. I demonstrate that religious experts of prophet-healing churches are usually expected to be 'wounded healers,' but that they are confronted with a crisis of legitimation once they themselves actually fall ill. During their quest for therapy, diseased church leaders sometimes temporarily 'de-Christianize' themselves in order to regain a position of authority in their church later on. Third, African Christian leaders are normally portrayed as a 'source' from which powerful actions and ideas originate before being disseminated among lay religionists. Yet, as I will show with reference to the 'translation model' of power (Latour 1986), the characterization of religious leaders as an 'originating source' should in many cases be seen instead as a retrospective assessment whereby the (supposed) center is constituted *ex post facto* through performative references to this effect by the (supposed) periphery.⁷ Finally, Pentecostal-charismatic leaders' (supposed) centrality during ritual interactions is being enacted with the help of what I call 'assemblages of paraphernalia.' These assemblages consist of human and non-human actants, such as objects and material and immaterial technologies, all of which are invoked by religious leaders to give support to their acts of self-authorization. I argue that the last two strategies are attempts to stabilize the authority of church leaders by embedding them in socio-religious networks of different sorts, yet they also make leaders precariously dependent on these networks in fundamental ways.

Leading in Ignorance

Living at the homesteads of leaders of African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic churches in southern Zambia; accompanying them to Sunday services, church meetings, and other religious events; and taking part in their daily lives over the course of many months during my fieldwork, I became witness to the fact that these leaders were expected to be exceptionally knowledgeable, not only with regard to Christian doctrines, liturgy, morality, and the mundane practicalities of leading a divinely ordained life, but also in relation to spiritual truths that were regarded as being accessible only to those who have a privileged association with the Holy Spirit.⁸ For example, their expertise was in great demand during public ceremonies, when giving instructions to neophytes and admonishing their church congregations on how to live a life pleasing to God. In addition, church members, neighbors, and sometimes even needy non-church-goers from the wider area contacted them every now and then in order to seek their advice about, for instance, health issues, family problems, or how to settle a particular dispute. In interactions like these, church leaders were at times assigned a role resembling that of a village headman, and, as far as I could tell, most of them did their best to come up to people's expectations concerning both their experiences of life and their Christian expertise, to a large extent because these expectations were a response to their own claims to exceptional knowledgeability.

However, as I came to realize over time, there was one notable exception to this performance of knowledgeability. This exception pertained to the church leaders' relative ignorance with regard to the question of what in particular was happening in *other* churches in the area. At the time of my research, grassroots ecumenism (Jules-Rosette 1977)—for example, in the form of church meetings organized jointly by different Christian denominations—was a rarity. All the same, as I have discussed elsewhere (Kirsch 2008), Christian practices in the area of my research are characterized by a marked selectivity. Individuals have wide-ranging possibilities to make personal choices concerning their participation in a given religious community, to circumvent other people's attempts to exert dominance over them, and to leave different doors open in terms of what they consider plausible religious truths or viable religious practices. Thus, broadly speaking, changing one's religious affiliation repeatedly (although sometimes only temporarily) represents the rule rather than the exception. What is more, although adjustments to a new church frequently entail suggestions of exclusivity—in the sense that “our Church is the only divinely ordained community”—the intersection of different Christian and non-Christian practices during the lifetime of any one person in the long run builds up a certain variable stock of religious knowledge. In other words, when talking to lay religionists in southern Zambia, I am time and again amazed by how much they know about what is going on in a variety of different denominations.

Not so with the church leaders. In contrast to members of the laity, their affiliational mobility is much more restricted. A comparison of the religious biographies of the leaders of African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic churches in my area of research reveals a striking pattern: making one's career within one denomination progressively curbs the likelihood of this particular person also attending or becoming (temporarily) affiliated with another denomination. As a consequence, congregations are characterized by a striking asymmetry: while church leaders' knowledge of Christian discourses and practices as promoted within their own denomination tends to surpass the laity's state of knowledge in these issues, members of the laity usually have much more information on what is said and done in other denominations. It might be thought that the latter type of knowledge might not be of any importance for church leaders concerned with the daily running of their own church. However, as already noted, Christian practices in the area of my research are characterized by a marked degree of individual affiliational mobility and selectivity. Nobody can be forced, by either relatives or church authorities, to attend a

certain denomination. Given this background, it is clear that the various denominations have to struggle to maintain a following. Their authority is not fixed but must be continuously confirmed or even constituted anew. Being embedded in a highly competitive religious context, church leaders are thus at pains to demonstrate that their own denomination has been divinely ordained. If they fail to make their claims plausible, their congregations slowly drift away.

Seen from this perspective, the church leaders' relative ignorance appears in another light. Since it is embedded in a context of religious competitiveness, this ignorance cannot be considered to indicate a lack of concern or feelings of superiority or indifference. Instead, as came home to me when witnessing their desperate efforts to gather information privately and indirectly about religious competitors, ignorance about these matters was felt to be hugely problematic by church leaders because it represented a structural disadvantage in their attempts to consolidate their religious authority. These efforts were undertaken on the quiet, for example, by unobtrusively interrogating relatives who had gathered experiences in other Christian denominations, since doing so openly would, it was thought, cast doubt on the autonomous sovereignty of the religious authority of the church leader concerned.

This is certainly not the first time in anthropology that the conventional idea of a natural connection between knowledgeability and those in power has been questioned. For instance, David Graeber (2012: 115) has recently noted that "political scientists have long observed a 'negative correlation' ... between coercion and information: that is, while relatively democratic regimes tend to be awash in too much information, as everyone bombards political authorities with explanations and demands, the more authoritarian and repressive a regime, the less reason people have to tell it anything—which is why such regimes are forced to rely so heavily on spies, intelligence agencies, and secret police." In a similar vein, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 28), drawing attention to what he refers to as "a problem of asymmetric ignorance," states that Western "philosophers and thinkers who shape the nature of social science have produced theories that embrace the entirety of humanity ... [T]hese statements have been produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind—that is, those living in non-Western cultures" (ibid.: 29). Moreover, he points out that "[t]hird-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history [while] historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate" (ibid.: 28).

The example of the ignorance of the church leaders discussed above adds another facet to these insights. It makes it clear that it is sometimes the claim and expectation of an extraordinary knowledgeability—more particularly, a knowledgeability that does not depend on a supply of external information (e.g., about what other churches are doing)—that forestalls the leaders' attempts to strengthen their positions of authority through information-gathering activities. Instead, the lay religionists' expectations in this regard isolate the church leaders, who are expected, in a manner of speaking, to know these matters autonomously and sovereignly. But since the leaders of African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic churches are performing in a constantly changing and competitive religious field, it is not surprising that they will sooner or later belie these expectations. The followers' recognition of the church leaders' claim to extraordinary knowledgeability thus contributes to making the position of the latter structurally precarious.

Religious Leaders as 'Wounded Healers'

In the late 1980s, a prominent leader and spiritual healer of the Full Gospel Church of Central Africa, an African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic denomination with its headquarters in the hilly escarpment between the Gwembe Valley and the Central African Plateau, became seriously ill.⁹ This church leader, whom I will call Rabson, was aware that sickness presented a problem for

him because, in the context of his church, and in African Christianity more generally, bodily weakness is often perceived to indicate moral failure. Leadership roles therefore depend on physical fitness and are questioned in the case of illness. Thus, knowing that his physical ailment was undermining his religious authority, Rabson went into hiding, eluding the advice and demands of his therapy managing group (Janzen 1978, 1987) and traveling to distant places to be helped. Yet, as Rabson gradually came to realize in this process, he did not travel far enough and anonymously enough.

The first stop on Rabson's quest for therapy was another African-initiated church some 50 miles from his home village that, at the time, had a good reputation for healing with the power of the Holy Spirit. But while waiting for the Sunday service and the healing ceremonies to begin, he learned in conversations with others that this church was linked to a Christian community adjacent to his home village. As a consequence, and fearing that his medical condition might be exposed to a wider Christian public through networks of gossip, Rabson decided spontaneously to hide his health problems and to sneak away at the end of the church service.

According to what he recounted to me some years later, this experience left him in a desperate mood and made him change registers by deliberately sidestepping Pentecostal-charismatic networks and contacting non-Christian healers, such as 'traditional' herbalists (sing., *mung'anga*). Yet even there Rabson faced difficulties. Upon arriving at the compound of a renowned *mung'anga*, he was asked to place himself among the other patients, who, while they were being medically treated, lived on the herbalist's premises. What followed, according to Rabson, was an emotionally stressful process of being ridiculed and humiliated in front of others. This was because, as it turned out, the *mung'anga* was less interested in finding the cause of Rabson's illness and more interested in using him to discredit Christianity publicly. Rudely gesturing at Rabson, who was dressed in Christian attire, the herbalist asked onlookers whether they could explain to him why a Christian needs a non-Christian to recover his health and how this could be true even for leaders of Christianity like Rabson. Feeling too weak to defend himself, Rabson was in the uncomfortable position of being disgraced by the very person he had approached to aid him in matters of health. In conversation with me, Rabson acknowledged that he might have provoked the herbalist's reaction because he was, as usual, carrying his staff, which made him feel spiritually protected but also was a very obvious indicator of his Christian identity.¹⁰ However that might be, at the climax of the public humiliation, the *mung'anga* wrested the staff from Rabson's hands and broke it by smashing it on the ground, declaring that it was in fact a witchcraft item containing dangerous medicine.

It is easy to understand why this was not the end of Rabson's miserable quest for therapy. With his staff broken in two and all Christian items concealed in a plastic bag that served as his luggage, he traveled farther to the northwest and was eventually cured by a Lozi healer. But this was only possible, Rabson emphasized when talking to me, because he had learned his lesson: when introducing himself to this second *mung'anga*, he gave a false name and never even mentioned that he was a Christian. Some weeks later, having regained his health, he returned to his home village, resuming his activities as a church leader and spiritual healer. Few people knew about his odyssey, and the only thing that kept reminding Rabson of what had happened to him during his journey was the weld joint on his staff, which had stirred the wrath of the *mung'anga*.

It is no surprise that Rabson was hesitant to relate this story. It is the story of a religious leader who fears being discredited in terms of his spirituality and being degraded within the socio-religious hierarchy if it were to become known that he had fallen ill, and who subsequently makes the distressing discovery that, for a religious healer-as-patient like himself, being cured by another religious healer is a matter not just of health but also of religious politics. This is because, as explained above, the religious field in southern Zambia takes the form of

a competitive market involving different Christian denominations and various non-Christian religious practitioners who compete for members and clients by exalting their own spiritual powers while disparaging their competitors' claims to religious authority. Moreover, as I came to learn in the course of my fieldwork, in the case of a sick church leader who is cured by the leaders of another church, the latter often demand the former to subordinate himself spiritually and/or hierarchically to their authority. The physical ailment of a church leader therefore often triggers an institutional reshuffling of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity in this region.

I have presented this case study in detail because there are interesting lessons to be learned from it with regard to the ambiguities of becoming and being the leader of an African-initiated church in the area of my research. These ambiguities are related to the precarious double-sidedness of what it means for church leaders to be 'wounded healers'. Among Christians in southern Zambia, spiritual leadership is widely seen to presuppose a biographical rupture. In some cases, this rupture takes the form of spiritual turmoil, entailing visions, altered states of mind, and prolonged retreats into otherwise unpopulated bush lands. For others, becoming a church leader involves the experience of falling sick and then being healed by the power of the Holy Spirit as mediated through a Christian church. In the latter cases, the healing activities of a Pentecostal-charismatic denomination often lead to church growth as a spin-off because some of those who have received successful spiritual treatment open new branches of this church in their home villages. What is of special importance for my argument in this article is the fact that the experience of being healed of an illness through the Holy Spirit in many cases forms the legitimizing basis for one's vocation as a Christian healer. In other words, the leaders of African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic churches in the area of my research are commonly expected to be 'wounded healers'.

In the Western history of ideas, the concept of the 'wounded healer' can be traced to Greek mythology and the philosopher Plato. According to the historian of medicine Stanley Jackson (2001: 2), 'wounded healers' are healers "whose personal experiences of illness have left lingering effects on them—in the form of lessons learned that later serve constructive purposes, in the form of attitudes and sensitivities that recurrently serve them in ministering to those whom they treat, or in the form of symptoms or characteristics that stay with them and usefully influence their therapeutic endeavors." Jackson also points out that the "term *wounded healer* is now in common use in areas such as rehabilitation medicine ... the self-help movement, and chronic-illness support groups, as well as in the ... areas of psychotherapy and pastoral care" (ibid.: 1).

In anthropology and related disciplines, this term has most prominently been used by Mircea Eliade (1960) in relation to shamanism and later by John Janzen (1992) in his work on *ngoma* cults of affliction in Central and Southern Africa. Janzen understands the 'wounded healer' to be a core feature of *ngoma* and the biographical climax of a characteristic "choreography of events over time" consisting of "the process of sickness ... healing, searching for answers, becoming well, and emerging as a healer" (ibid.: 87). More recently, Janzen's interpretation of the 'wounded healer' has been criticized by Dutch anthropologist Ria Reis (2000) for its (alleged) culturalist bias. With reference to sangoma healing in South Africa, Reis states: "For those who consult diviners as patients, a history of ancestor illness testifies to the true calling and legitimacy of these healers. Such a history testifies to the involuntariness of divinership. It clears healers of selfish motives, such as greed for power or money. It is necessary to have suffered a serious illness to be able to claim that one's healing power originates from the ancestors. Suffering certainly is a lived reality for diviners, but as a sign of a calling it is also an ideology" (ibid.: 73).

We are thus confronted with two anthropological perspectives on the 'wounded healer' complex that are difficult to reconcile with each other. First, there is the idea that personal suffering can have beneficial effects in the wider social sphere if patients are transformed into healers.

Second, there is the argument that the role of the ‘wounded healer’ is an ideological cloak to hide selfish interests and that it thus needs to be seen in the context of micro-political asymmetries between healers and their patients.

When applying the concept of the ‘wounded healer’ to the case of Pentecostal-charismatic leaders in Zambia, it can be noted that—irrespective of whether we subscribe to a cultural or an ideological reading of this notion—the case study presented above illustrates that the leaders of African-initiated churches face a severe legitimation crisis if their personal status turns from that of a healer to that of a patient (see also Kirsch 2002). Examining such precarious transformations of socio-religious status is instructive because it contradicts familiar self-representations of Christians in Africa and elsewhere who tend to emphasize that ailing Christians should stay clear of traditional medical treatment and instead seek a truly Christian cure in order to make a ‘complete break with the past’ (Meyer 1998). In contrast to statements to this effect, my ethnographic findings attest to the fact that, in the area of my research, a Pentecostal-charismatic church leader who falls sick and who nevertheless hopes to retain (or regain) a position of religious authority in the future must make sure to exit Christian networks and to divest himself of visible markers of Christian identity during the quest for therapy. In other words, a Christian healer-as-patient in this context is required to de-Christianize himself or herself temporarily in order later on to be allowed to act again as a Christian healer-for-patients.

Taking all this into account, and when looking at matters from a diachronic perspective, the notion of the ‘wounded healer’ pertains to the (self-)legitimatory biographical transformation of a person from being a patient to being a healer. Yet Pentecostal-charismatic churches in the area of my research treat these categories as mutually exclusive, thus allowing church leaders to make a clear distinction between themselves as healers-for-patients, on the one hand, and lay religionists as (potential) patients-to-be-healed, on the other. At the same time, and as a consequence of this mutual exclusivity, there exists no intermediary role and/or institutionalized space of socio-religious interaction for a ‘wounded healer’ from a synchronic perspective—that is, there is no option for the position of healer-as-patient. If a religious leader falls sick, he or she is expected to retreat from the social realm and to spend some time in spatially and socially remote areas in order to re-establish a privileged relationship with the Holy Spirit. Alternatively, as we have seen above, the church leader is left to his own devices as concerns the quest for therapy.¹¹ This uncompromising stance toward the irreconcilability of patienthood and healer-ship is promoted by church leaders in their relations with lay religionists. But it is likewise characteristic of how the church leaders’ personal medical situations are evaluated by their followers, thus contributing to the precariousness of their positions.

Leadership Ex Post Facto

Developing a new concept of power, Bruno Latour (1986), in his essay “The Powers of Association,” contrasts the conventional “diffusion model of power in which a successful command moves under an impetus given it from a central source ... with a translation model in which such a command, if it is successful, results from the actions of a chain of agents each of whom ‘translates’ it in accordance with his/her own projects” (ibid.: 264). To explicate the latter, he identifies two mechanisms, the first of which does away with the idea that those in power are endowed with an ‘initial force’ that is responsible for the diffusion of power. By contrast, the translation model of power starts from the assumption that “[t]he spread in time and space of anything—claims, orders, artifacts, goods [i.e., a ‘token’]—is in the hands of people; each of these people may act in many different ways, letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it,

or betraying it, or adding to it, or appropriating it. The faithful transmission of, for instance, an order by a large number of people is a rarity in such a model and if it occurs it requires explanation. In other words, there is no inertia to account for the spread of a token. When no one is there to take up the statement or the token then it simply stops” (ibid.: 267). The second mechanism consists in the retrospective gesture by the people enrolled in this chain of translation through which the power—although it is actually created through the association of all these people—is “attributed to *one* of them” (ibid.: 265; italics added). In doing so, the existence of an original source of this power is claimed and at the same time retroactively constituted.

This concept of power can productively be applied to processes of authorization and self-authorization in African-initiated Christianity. Take the interdependence of senior and junior leaders that characterizes relations between headquarters of a Pentecostal-charismatic church and its outlying branches. For example, in the Spirit Apostolic Church (SAC), religious authority evolved in the form of an extended dispersion of charisma (Shils 1958). All the church elders at the time of my fieldwork had achieved their association with the Holy Spirit through an act of intermediation involving someone who had previously achieved a reputation for spiritual capacity. In the case of the senior elders, this mediation was traced back to the Full Gospel Church of Central Africa, mentioned above. In the case of the junior leaders in the branches, the mediation of the Holy Spirit was said to have been carried out by the senior members of the SAC. In this way, authorization by the church elders was related to previous instances of spiritualization, that is, to centers of origination where the particular dispersion of charisma was supposed to have started. This referentiality did not necessitate co-presence: most congregations were visited by the superior leaders of the church only rarely. When they came, they were celebrated and treated in a highly respectful manner by the members and junior leaders of the branches. Obviously, close contact with the senior leaders was prestigious and was deemed to have a spiritualizing effect. During the long periods of the senior leaders’ absence, however, the branches resorted to making discursive references to the church’s headquarters, thus also endowing it with a certain presence.

The senior church elders at headquarters were well aware of the significance of occasional visits to the branches. Some of the conflicts within the church were actually thought to result from the failure to tour them regularly. Yet at the same time, the elders tried to ensure that the congregations did not see them too often. During church meetings, there were grass shelters near the grounds for worship where the senior leaders spent most of their time. Members of the laity were not allowed to enter these shelters, which were deliberately built in a way to prevent people on the outside from looking in. Even during their visits, the senior leaders thus sought to present themselves as something extraordinary and as rarely to be seen. The grass shelters had been built by the local junior leaders, who, during the meetings, served as the intermediaries between the laity and the senior elders. Although the senior leaders provided the agenda, it was the junior leaders who moderated and arranged the proceedings and who appeared in public, allowing the senior leaders to remain in a more elevated background.

The performative construction of authority was thus based on a balancing of presence and absence. An attempt was made to create an aura by the immediacy of the aloof. This served both the junior and the senior leaders. While the junior leaders presented themselves as efficient mediators between the laity and the representatives of an allegedly outstanding spirituality, the senior leaders acted with authority over the junior leaders, at the same time trying to maintain an unbridgeable distance from the laity.

The division of labor between the junior and senior leaders during church meetings entailed moments of mutual instrumentalization. A process evolved in which the two groups publicly displayed recognition of each other (cf. Wallis 1982). During the meetings, the junior leaders

benefited from the presence of their superiors, who provided them with an authority that could be extended into the everyday religious practices of the branches. In order to achieve this end, the junior leaders propagated the authority of the superior church elders, elevating the latter in order to be elevated themselves. Religious authority evolved in a chain of translation (Latour 1986; see also Callon and Latour 1981) in which the authority of the senior leaders was constructed by the junior leaders' instrumentalizing and self-authorizing references to it. The religious authority of the senior leaders thus relied crucially on the willingness of the junior leaders to use them for their own empowerment. At the same time, the senior leaders instrumentalized the junior leaders by allowing them to perform on the public stage at religious practices. By having the junior leaders deal with the minor activities of the meeting, the senior elders' own spirituality and religious activities were endowed with outstanding importance. Each of the groups had a certain influence over the other while simultaneously being dependent on each other's influence.

In contrast to two strategies of self-authorization explored in the previous sections, the strategy examined here does not rely on acts of distinction stressing the church leaders' extraordinariness and exceptionalism. On the contrary, the socio-spatial outreach of claims to religious authority is here widened through the differentiation and internal segmentation of church hierarchies. However, by expanding the chains of translation, the mutual interdependence among church leaders is intensified so that, as an unintended consequence, each position in this socio-religious chain of translation finds itself in a state of constant precariousness. After all, as the turbulent history of denominational schisms in this part of the world demonstrates, people in chains of translation like these act in different ways, "letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it" (Latour 1986: 267).

Assemblages of Paraphernalia

The strategy of self-authorization employed by Pentecostal-charismatic leaders to be discussed in this section concerns the church leaders' (supposed) centrality during ritual interactions, which is being enacted with the help of what I describe as 'assemblages of paraphernalia'. As will become clear in what follows, according to my understanding of this notion, the term 'paraphernalia' refers to the elements used for a spiritual activity. These enablements (cf. Kirsch 2008: 169–175) can include human and non-human actants, such as objects, as well as material and immaterial technologies. I suggest that aligning and (depending on the situation) realigning the enabling elements in the form of assemblages serves as a means of stabilizing positions of authority and constituting socio-religious centrality, while at the same time endowing these positions with a certain precariousness.

For example, whenever the bishop of the St. Moses God's Holy Spirit Church went on a crusade through southern Zambia, starting out from the headquarters of the church in the Gwembe Valley, he was usually accompanied by his third wife, who was a gifted singer with an extraordinary talent for bringing people together and engaging them in joint ritual activities.¹² More particularly, upon arriving at a village, the bishop's wife would draw people into the performance of a repertoire of call-and-response songs that was specific to this church and usually unknown to those attending the ritual activities (see also Kirsch 1998). According to the bishop's explanations, these songs—if sung enthusiastically by a large gathering—call forth the presence of the Holy Spirit, thus enabling him to work miracles in healing, prophecy, exorcism, and witch-finding. In the curative rituals enacted during these crusades, sick people were made to sit on the ground, while village residents, more or less randomly congregated, were made to stand in a circle around the patient and intone the songs whose tunes and lyrics the bishop's third wife

had taught them only a few minutes before. After some time, the bishop would move into the circle and allow the songs to spiritualize him, that is, to allow the Holy Spirit to enter his body. In a state of possession, the bishop would subsequently pray for the patient by speaking in tongues, by the laying on of hands, and by slightly slapping a copy of the Bible against the patient's joints and chest and pressing it on top of his or her head. In several cases that I witnessed, at some stage this procedure would trigger a possession trance of the patient, which was seen as an indication that the bishop had mediated the Holy Spirit into the patient's body, resulting in a spiritual struggle between this divine entity and the satanic forces holding sway over the patient.

It is noteworthy that during the bishop's crusades in regions where no branches of the St. Moses God's Holy Spirit Church existed, the people attending the curative rituals did not belong to the membership of the church, and they were not even required to have faith in the bishop's spiritual powers. This was unusual compared to other Pentecostal-charismatic churches in the area of my research, many of which made faith a condition for summoning up the Holy Spirit and doing miracles. For instance, the prophet of one of the African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic churches, whose services I regularly attended, kept emphasizing that he would not be able to have visions if non-believers were present at the site of ritual activities. Others made baptism, not faith, a precondition for acts of spirituality.

Recapitulating what we have learned from this ethnographic example so far, we can note that, in the case of the bishop's crusades, what is required for a patient's cure through spiritual mediation is, among other things, the following assemblage of enabling elements: the bishop's persona, body, and prehistory of spirituality; his third wife, along with her social and musical talents; other people who are willing to take part in the ritual activities; a specific spatial form, namely, a circle; a specified set of songs; passionate singing; hands for clapping and touching the patient; a copy of the Bible; and the Holy Spirit.¹³

Furthermore, we can take note of the fact that bringing these elements together to constitute a co-present assemblage of paraphernalia is not sufficient. The bishop and his wife also arrange them in a specific order to accomplish spiritual mediation. From the bishop's perspective, this order presents itself as follows: first, position the singers' bodies in a circle; second, make the patient sit in the middle of this circle; third, initiate passionate singing and direct it at the patient and then at yourself once you have moved into the circle; fourth, take a copy of the Bible and physically touch the patient with your hands and the Bible; fifth, allow spiritualizing songs to enter your body; finally, experience the Holy Spirit moving through your body and then through the Bible in your hands into the body of the patient, where this spiritual entity will develop healing powers.

On many occasions, the bishop and his wife actually succeeded in establishing religious centrality during ritual interactions by engaging the aforementioned assemblage of paraphernalia. However, it also happened that they faced difficulties in getting the ball rolling. Despite strenuous efforts, at times they failed to convene a sufficient number of people to form a circle, and every now and then the performance of the call-and-response songs was pathetic rather than passionate. On occasions like these, the bishop's strategy of self-authorization, which relied on elements over which he had no control, foundered. In the eyes of others, he and his wife looked like a rather odd couple, apparently engaged in mumbo jumbo, and were mocked by the village youth.

Conclusions

In her renowned study of sacred kingship among the Bemba in northeastern Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia), tellingly entitled "Keeping the King Divine," Audrey Richards (1968: 24) poses an intriguing question that has served as an inspiration for the present article: "How

are men turned into gods and how are they cajoled, frightened or bribed into staying that way?" Using her ethnographic data from the early 1930s and mid-1950s, Richards shows that the Citimukulu represented and acted as the sacred center of his people, and that his subjects were physically dependent on him due to the powers over nature that were ascribed to him. At the same time, the religious supremacy of the king—and, thus, the efficacy of the rituals performed by him—was seen to be jeopardized at all times by health problems, ritual misdemeanors, and disturbances concerning the king's sex life. Actually, so many interfering factors were assumed to exist against which precautions were to be taken that priest-counselors were entrusted with the task of making sure that the divine king remained divine. But on top of this, according to Richards, these priest-counselors "also hold him responsible for national disasters, scold him, try to control his most intimate personal life and almost delight in their power over him" (ibid.: 33).

In the present article, I have discussed the ambiguous status of Pentecostal-charismatic leadership in Zambia, which in certain regards resembles what Richards wrote about sacred kings among the Bemba. In both cases, socio-religious welfare is thought to depend on the extraordinariness and exceptionalism of leaders; in both cases, this extraordinariness constitutes a co-production between leaders and followers. However, in contrast to the situation in northeastern Zambia at the time of Richards's fieldwork, the religious field in the area of my research in present-day southern Zambia is characterized by pluralism and competitiveness. Divinity is therefore not a word used in the singular; rather, at least in regard to African-initiated Pentecostal-charismatic churches, it is a pluralized claim to religious authority that normally does not go uncontested and that requires recognition by a following if it is to have palpable effects in the socio-religious sphere.

Given this constellation, people claiming positions of religious leadership resort to strategies of self-authorization, four of which were discussed in this article. I have argued that these strategies have unintended and paradoxical effects that counteract what is sought to be accomplished through them. First, while the claim to extraordinary knowledgeability can stabilize one's religious authority, what also follows from this claim is the common view that it is compromising for religious leaders to gather information about what their competitors are doing. As a consequence, leaders' (relative) ignorance in this matter puts them at a structural disadvantage. Second, since bodily weakness on the part of both patients and religious leaders is usually seen to be an indication of moral failure, the quest for therapy by diseased church leaders often involves them exiting Pentecostal-charismatic networks and temporarily divesting themselves of visible markers of their Christian identity. Third, since the socio-religious power of the senior leaders of Pentecostal-charismatic churches rests on the willingness of the junior leaders to use them for their own empowerment, they are entangled in precarious relationships of mutual dependence, entailing the unsettling awareness that they can be let down at more or less any time. Last but not least, a similar dynamic can be identified when looking at attempts by church leaders to attain centrality during ritual interactions with the help of assemblages of paraphernalia. This strategy of self-authorization relies on the use of elements that cannot be controlled by the religious leader concerned and that, as a consequence, can easily turn against him.

In contrast to the divine kingship analyzed by Richards and others, the precariousness of the socio-religious positions of the church leaders described above is not perceived to constitute an essential threat to African Christians in the area of my research. Certainly, church members are worried when their church elders turn out to be less extraordinary and exceptional than they claim to be. But we should also note that there is a certain lack of compliance involved when lay religionists adamantly insist on evaluating members of the church leadership by a magnified version of those standards that they themselves are being measured by. Therefore, given

the self-assertive insistence of church leaders on exceptionalism and their proclivity to raise “expectation[s] of the extraordinary” (Feuchtwang and Mingming 2001: 16), the failure to produce evidence of such extraordinariness at times engenders a whiff of *Schadenfreude* on the part of lay religionists, setting in motion yet another quest for empowerment through the co-production of a socio-religious center.

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■ NOTES

1. As will become clear in what follows, my heuristic use of the term ‘the center’ differs markedly from that of Edward Shils (1961: 117), who famously treated ‘centers’ as being part of the empirical world: “Society has a centre. There is a central zone in the structure of society ... The centre, or the central zone, is a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs. It is the centre of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern the society. It is the centre because it is the ultimate and irreducible; and it is felt to be such by many who cannot give explicit articulation to its irreducibility.”
2. For an extended discussion of Weber’s notion of charisma and the conceptual problems associated with it, see Kirsch (2008: 4–10).
3. The ethnographic case studies examined in this article for the most part focus on religious communities that resemble what studies on ‘African-initiated churches’ (Anderson 2001) refer to as, for example, ‘Spirit-type churches’ (Daneel 1971), ‘Zionist churches’ (Sundkler 1961), or ‘prophet-healing churches’ (Turner 1967). My use of the term ‘Pentecostal-charismatic’ in relation to these communities takes into account, first, the fact that they “emerged out of the global Pentecostal movement” (Maxwell 1999: 244), which had its origin in Baptist and Methodist sanctification circles. Soon after the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, this movement spread to South Africa, from where it was ‘translated’ to other regions in southern Africa. Second, my use of the term ‘Pentecostal’ recognizes the fact that “pentecostalism is not a denomination or a creed, but a movement, a cluster of religious practices and attitudes that transcends ecclesiastical boundaries” (Cox 1995: 246). This ‘cluster’, which links my case studies in this article to the broader Pentecostal movement, especially concerns the key importance ascribed to the Holy Spirit and to its impact on one’s faith and religious practice. Third, my use of the term ‘Pentecostal-charismatic’ is not meant to establish a theological typology (cf. Anderson 2001: 110), nor does it refer to what has been called, since the 1960s, the ‘(neo)charismatic movement’ (cf. Robbins 2004: 121–122). Instead, I employ this term to underline the fact that inspiration deriving from the Holy Spirit represents a critical basis for religious authority in the churches concerned.
4. For an interpretation of the extraordinariness of charisma that draws on the interrelated notions of ‘pomp’, ‘vulgarity’, and ‘extravagance’, see Feuchtwang (2010).
5. A good example of this type of literature are the writings on South African church leader Isaiah Mdlwamafa Shembe (1865–1935), about whom a host of articles and books have been written by, among others, Hans-Jürgen Becken, Duncan Brown, Liz Gunner, Andreas Heuser, Irving Hexham, Robert Papini, Gerardus Cornelius Oosthuizen, and Absolom Vilakazi. All the same, as David Maxwell (2006: 388) has remarked in a recent review of his activities as the editor of the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, there is “still much room for studies of African Christian leaders, particularly those who lived through and helped the Church manage the tradition to independence.”

6. For example, with regard to recent transformations of Christianity in Africa, Birgit Meyer (2004: 448) notes: “Nothing can better evoke what is at stake than the ... contrast between the familiar image of African prophets from Zionist, Nazarite, or Aladura churches, dressed in white gowns, carrying crosses, and going to pray in the bush, and the flamboyant leaders of the new mega-churches, who dress in the latest (African) fashion, drive nothing less than a Mercedes Benz, participate in the global Pentecostal jetset, broadcast the message through flashy TV and radio programs, and preach the Prosperity Gospel to their deprived and hitherto hopeless born-again followers at home and in the diaspora.”
7. For a similar argument in the field of the anthropology of the state, see Nugent (1994).
8. My fieldwork in southern Zambia was funded by the Free University of Berlin, the German Academic Exchange Service, and the German Research Foundation. The data presented in this article were collected through prolonged periods of participant observation, informal conversations, and narrative interviews, as well as through the textual analysis of church constitutions and other religious documents.
9. The Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa is a Pentecostal denomination established in South Africa in 1910 after Archibald Cooper, one of its founders, had received “‘Apostolic Papers’ published by the ‘Azusa’ movement in Los Angeles” (Sundkler 1976: 52). In the early 1960s, a Tonga labor migrant returned from the mining towns of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where he had been a member of the Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa with its headquarters in South Africa. He decided to form a branch of this denomination in his home village at the escarpment between the Gwembe Valley and the plateau, eventually losing contact with the church’s headquarters. After some time, he separated and transformed his church into the Full Gospel Church of God in Central Africa. This denomination still exists today, although a major schism occurred in 1991 when some of the church elders decided to break with their bishop. This was the group that subsequently initiated the Spirit Apostolic Church (see below).
10. In accordance with Old Testament teachings, many church elders in sub-Saharan Africa have adopted the use of a wooden staff as a symbol of their Christian identity, spirituality, and status and—following Moses—as a tool for doing ‘miracles’, including prophecy, healing, and witch-finding. In certain regards, Rabson’s staff was unusual because it was not made of wood: it was a five-foot metal tube with the upper end bent to form a semi-circle.
11. For an analysis of an incident in which the status of a person attending a church service was reframed from being a ‘prophetess’ to being a ‘patient’ during ritual interactions, see Kirsch (2002).
12. This church belongs to the *mutumwa/nchimi* movement, which originated in the 1930s in the northeast of Zambia and has since established itself in many parts of the country. The movement started when, in the course of his career, one Aram Rabson Chinyamu Sikaonga, a traditional diviner and herbalist (*nchimi*) from Isoka District, started invoking Christian spiritual entities instead of ancestors when making reference to empowerment (Dillon-Malone 1983). The St. Moses God’s Holy Spirit Church was founded by a Gwembe Tonga called Million Chiyabi. Having attended T. Siwale’s *mutumwa/nchimi* congregation in Lusaka while working as a labor migrant in the early 1980s and having been cured of a severe illness in that church, Chiyabi returned to his home village in the Gwembe Valley in 1984, where he started a *mutumwa/nchimi* congregation and gradually succeeded in attracting followers.
13. For a detailed ethnographic analysis of the role of the Bible and the Holy Spirit in processes of Pentecostal-charismatic self-authorization, see Kirsch (2008: 145–154).

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